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Address editorial communications to Dr. George H. Kress as per address above. Address business and advertising communications to John Hunton.

EDITOR GEORGE H. KRESS

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BUSINESS MANAGER JOHN HUNTON
Advertising Representative for Northern California
L. J. FLYNN, 544 Market Street, San Francisco (DOuglas 0577)

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EDITORIALS

CALIFORNIA ELECTIONS: PRIMARY, ON AUGUST 25th; FINAL, ON NOVEMBER 3d. THEIR SIGNIFICANCE TO MEDICINE AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH

War Times do not Obliterate Civic Responsibilities.—Our Country being at war, there may be some physicians who would contend that state and local politics should have little or no place for consideration at this time. Such an attitude, however, does not make for efficient service in either war or civilian activities.

Since the placement of responsibilities and duties upon duly constituted agencies cannot be permitted to lapse even during periods of peace—because civilized nations must always carry on their lives in orderly fashion—it is increasingly important that under the stress and strain of existing warfare, careful thought be given concerning the capacity for service of those upon whom rests the responsibility for guidance of the State in these present days of peril.

Service with the armed forces has caused the withdrawal from civilian practice of many thousands of physicians (the allotment for California by the end of 1942 being not less than 2600 physicians in military service!); and it must be evident to all observers, that, once the war is over, it will take some years of readjustment to again bring back the practice of medicine to something of the form which existed before December 7, 1941. If the war continues for several years, as present circumstances would indicate, the conditions will be aggravated.

It is of great importance, therefore, that no laws be enacted that would add to present or imminent burdens. Or, to put it otherwise, that the interests of the public health and medical practice should not be jeopardized through ill-advised legislation at this time.

* * *

Primary Election on August 25th and Final Election on November 3d.—This last statement may remind us of our obligations in the two state elections soon to be held—the Primary Election on Tuesday, August 25th, and the final State Election on Tuesday, November 3d. Every physician should be fully alert to his civic responsibilities, and particularly, acquaint himself with the names and backgrounds of candidates for the State Senate and State Assembly. It is the legislators who enact the laws; and the merit of the statutes which come out of the legislative hopper

at each biennial session at Sacramento bears a direct and somewhat proportionate relationship to the kind of law-makers who determine what laws they will approve. Our subject, therefore, takes on a somewhat simple form, namely, that only state senators and assemblymen of good character and judgment, with sound views on the underlying principles of the public health, be elected, if the interests to which we are committed shall be conserved.

* * *

Little Danger from Legislators of High Type.—With legislators of high type, there is little to fear, since their votes will be cast in favor of all legitimate interests and objectives, provided the same be properly presented.

Organized Medicine in California, as the spokesman for Scientific Medicine and the Public Health, has been obliged, every two years, to scan carefully the hundreds of prospective laws submitted at each legislative session, to make certain that no proposed statutes were included, which openly or furtively could have done serious damage to either public health interests or the practice of scientific medicine.

* * *

Special Obligation to Colleagues in Military Service.—To this obligation may be added the following: that physicians who remain in civilian practice now have a special responsibility in these matters, since those of us who are still at home must guard not only our own personal interests, but the rights of those of our fellows who are in the Medical Corps of the Army and Navy; and who, when they return to resume civilian practice, must take up again under disadvantageous conditions, the development of their personal practices. Physicians who, in days gone by, have been forced to build anew their personal practices that were lost somewhat through absence, can appreciate that such experiences may be neither pleasant nor remunerative.

* * *

Primary Election: Attitude Towards Candidates.—In California, the primary election will be held on August 25th. As usual, in every district, there will be aspirants for the offices of State Senator and State Assemblyman. However, regarding the primary stage of the election procedure, it is not wise to make partisan commitments or espousals of this or the other candidate; and especially so, under the name of a scientific medical society. Whatever support is given, should be through individual action, as from a private citizen. Also, if a number of acceptable candidates are available, it is probably wise not to over-promote one such, to the detriment of the others, lest, perhaps, a wrong guess be made, so that the successful candidate, who was not previously espoused, changes, through unfortunate prior opposition, from a possible friend into the rôle of an antagonist.

In the primaries, therefore, it is best to show

interest through individual action, securing if possible, for future record and use, all available information concerning the background and other attributes of each candidate, but avoiding outright, organized support or opposition.

* * *

Final Election: Preferable Course of Action.

—Once however, the primary election is over, and the candidates for the two or more political parties have been determined by vote of the electorate, special endeavor should then be made not only to secure all the information above indicated, but other data, in addition. For instance: who is the personal physician of each of such candidates; and who, among the Doctors of Medicine in a Senatorial or Assembly district, has the most intimate personal relationship with the candidates? That being decided, an effort should be made, through such physicians, alone or with proper members of the local society, to learn what are the reactions of the candidates in relation to basic principles concerned with the conservation of the public health and proper standards of healing-art practice.

Regarding such interviews, it should be remembered that candidates are not permitted to make preliminary election pledges concerning proposed legislation of specific nature. It is, however, always in order to discuss basic principles. But after all, only that is what the medical profession is interested in, namely, the fundamental principles concerned with the protection of the public health and proper standards of practice.

* * *

Past Rôle of the Medical Profession in Legislative Matters.—For many years, physicians of California have seen one legislature after another convene, with comparatively few measures sponsored by the Doctors of Medicine. In fact, the profession may be said to partake somewhat of the party, "His Majesty's Opposition," as exemplified in the English Parliament, in that the profession is recurrently called upon to fight antagonistic legislation of detrimental nature, rather than to promote laws of its own making.

* * *

Proper Understanding of These Relationships Desirable.—It is well to keep these foregoing facts in mind, since they explain upon what basis is founded the obligation of physicians to take an interest, not only in the election of legislators on August 25th and November 3d, but also in prospective laws that will be submitted to the California Legislature in the first and subsequent weeks of the year 1943.

The hope is also expressed that many physicians may be inspired in this war year, 1942, to take a somewhat closer interest in our state elections than at former biennial periods.

Likewise, that they may keep in mind, that they do this not so much for themselves, as for the profession of which they are disciples, a profession whose many sons are now battling for us

all throughout the world, wherever duty may have called them.

* * *

Basic Science Law will be on the November 3d Ballot.—By now, every member of the California Medical Association should be aware of the fact that the proposed Basic Science Law will be on the November 3d ballot as Proposition No. 3. In last month's issue of CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE, on pages 4-6, the Basic Science Law was discussed at some length. And if any member did not notice the comment, the hope is expressed that he will take the time to scan the story there outlined.

The Basic Science proposition, at the end of some twenty years of endeavor, is now on the ballot. It will become a law if the voters are made acquainted with its beneficent purposes. The campaign of education cannot be passed over to others. This is a measure that was espoused and promoted by the California Medical Association in an effort to provide additional safeguards in the conservation of the public health. To secure the approval of the California electorate, especially in times such as the present, a strenuous educational campaign will be necessary. Every physician, therefore, has in this matter a very distinct responsibility, of which he is here reminded, lest in the performance of his daily, routine work, he forget his obligations to the people of California, his profession, his fellows who are overseas, and himself. Develop the habit of talking, "A Basic Science Law for California," from now on. That is one way of making an educational campaign become productive of results.

MEETINGS OF MEDICAL ORGANIZATIONS: (a) COUNTY SOCIETIES; (b) HOSPITAL STAFF MEETINGS. WHICH SHALL HAVE PREFERENCE?

Why the Reminder to Attend Meetings of Medical Societies?—Many members of the medical profession are only occasional attendants at meetings of their respective county medical societies and it becomes necessary, from time to time, to suggest to them, that it is largely through organized medicine, that scientific medicine—implying by that term the practice of medicine as it has been and still is carried on—has been able to do much of its work in the promotion of medical progress. It is good to remind ourselves of this fact, even though to some of our colleagues who find special pleasure in worshipping at the altar of superscience, such a statement, so bluntly put, may be received with skeptical nonapproval. We should be grateful, each and all of us, that of the 180,000 licensed nonsectarian practitioners in the United States, some 120,701 physicians—through membership in the hundreds of component county units of the constituent state associations composing our national federacy—have their names on the roster of the American Medical Association.

Pleasing though that thought may be, however, such massive numerical membership may not mean very much, if judged by the standards of real service. To pay annual dues to a society, a club or other organization is nothing of which one need be inherently proud. Such demands or assessments on the pocketbook, in themselves, only have significance if so to contribute involves denial of real needs or comforts.

* * *

What Good Membership Implies.—Membership in any group, in order to be of value to self and others, implies actual participation in its activities and the attainment of its objectives. Because the purposes of our component county medical societies are dedicated to ideals of great worth—the advancement of healing-art knowledge and the greater protection of the public health—it is the more regrettable that so many physicians permit themselves to develop a habit of nonattendance at the meetings of their local medical units.

The majority of the county medical societies hold only one meeting each month, or a total of about ten to twelve evenings in a year of 365 days. Yet many members defend their habitual nonattendance with one or other of a multitude of specious excuses. The practitioner who is battling for initial place, or who receives a call at the meeting hour, may be pardoned when he is absent. Many of the others, who choose their leisurely comfort in preference to contact and exchanges of opinion with colleagues, and make it a business not to turn out at the monthly gatherings, have no such excuse. A particular group of nonattendants who are worthy of criticism are those, who through greater success in life and fortunate backgrounds, are in position to be of special help to their fellows, but who show little interest in the profession's group affiliations.

The point here emphasized is this: that very few physicians are themselves such superlative individuals, in either knowledge or practice, that, without the good will and coöperation of colleagues, it would have been possible for them to have attained the stations in their communities which some of them are fortunate enough to occupy. If this be the case, then such colleagues should feel under special obligation to meet with their fellow members, to take part in the promotion of programs for both the scientific and organization sessions of their county societies. Coming back, now, to the initial statement that scientific medicine prospers, as it exists today, largely through the protection and aid of organized medicine, it follows that every member of the profession should give more than lip-service or dues-payments to the development of the societies, which collectively, constitute what is called, Organized Medicine.

Particularly is this true at the present moment, when those of us who remain at home must safeguard the interests of our fellows who are in the Medical Corps of Army and Navy. Let us all